

**Concessions Workflow Analysis: Park Unit Concessions
Presentation of Findings to Date
Concessions Management Advisory Board
March 22, 2006**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Interviews: 5 out of 10 have been completed.
3 Park Unit Concessions Specialist, 1 Regional Concessions Manager, 1 National
1 small/1 medium/1 large concessions program
All have been in the park service more than 10 years

Of the Park Unit Concessions Specialists:

Collateral Duties

- 2 have no collateral duties
- 1 has collateral EEO duties
- 1 does contracting work as well as contract administration

FEEDBACK

Characteristics of Successful Park Unit Level Concessions Specialists

- Interpersonal skills
- Basic business knowledge
- Hospitality knowledge/experience
- NAU training
- Common sense
- Interest in visitor services
- Detail-oriented
- Documenting and record keeping skills
- Teamwork skills
- Receive support from management staff and superintendent
- Described as “1/3 lawyer, 1/3 accountant, 1/3 diplomat”
- Ability to build relationships across park divisions and get assistance with areas of expertise such as NEPA/Interpretation/Maintenance

Training Needs/Suggestions

- For Existing Staff
 - Update training for existing concessions staff on the following topics
 - FMSS/PMIS
 - Accounting review
 - Leasehold surrender interest
 - Pricing and evaluation refresher courses
 - Annual Financial Report review
 - Negotiations and Conflict Management

- NEPA/VERP/Interpretation/Maintenance and Construction –but specifically information that concessions specialists need about these areas
- Recent IMR audio trainings have been very helpful – would like more, similar opportunities for refresher training.
- More emphasis on contract law – specifically practical guidelines and changes
- For New Staff
 - NAU training – maybe shorten/accelerate to bring new staff up to speed faster
 - Add Negotiations and Contract Management coursework to NAU
 - Park Service Orientation (need to understand the mission, what the park divisions do, etc)
 - Mentor Program: Experienced park concessions specialists have built a network of peers they reach out to for help in addition to their regional office staff. New NPS concessions staff won't have those peer contacts – set them up with a concessions specialist at another park unit who will serve as a mentor for them (*time commitment: 4 hrs/week for 6mos to 1 year*).
- For All Staff
 - “Yahoo Groups”-type Discussion Board: Would be helpful to have an online discussion group where all concessions specialists could exchange ideas, throw out questions, receive updates from WASO on new rule changes, etc. Would only be useful if it was widely used.
 - Web Page for Park Concessions Specialists: This page would be tailored with “buttons” leading to topics of specific interest to park concessions specialists. The topics (NEPA/Construction/Campground Standards) would have the information that concessions specialists need – not necessarily be an exhaustive discussion of the topic. The page would also post the latest information on changes in concessions procedures and would update the topic guidelines so they could serve as the source for “state of the art” concessions information.
 - Better education for Superintendents on contracts and concessions “do’s and don’ts”.

Current Concessions Challenges at the Park Unit Level

- Lack of Understanding/Visibility of Concessions
 - Park management staff often doesn't understand the role of concessions – tension arises between the rules of concessions and the wishes of park staff because of lack of understanding around contracting process.
 - People forget about concessions – only go to concessions when they need them for things like special events.
 - Perception that concessions is an unappreciated duty because it deals with commercial activities
- Workload Issues
 - Not enough staff in program generally
 - Concessions is often a collateral duty – particularly in smaller parks. This means the concessions specialist often does not have sufficient time to focus on the program and

build the necessary expertise. If concessions must be a collateral duty, then it should be the primary duty and a smaller, less time-consuming secondary responsibility should be the collateral.

- Amount of paperwork can be overwhelming.
- Circuit Rider: this concept was endorsed for a group of parks that were geographically close but did not have enough need individually for a full-time concessions specialist. This was seen as a good solution to the problem of reduced budgets leading to concessions as a collateral duty.
- Turnover among concessioner staff leads to a lot of training/assistance time of park staff concessions specialists for new concessioner staff.
- As interpretive programs are cut, concessionaires add on interpretive-type programs to attract visitors – leads to increased workload for concessions specialists as they must review these programs for appropriateness, etc.